



NEW OPPORTUNITIES, INC.

Helping People. Changing Lives. ~ Community Action Partnership

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Human Services Committee Hearing

Tuesday February 21, 2023

Testimony in Support of Raised Senate Bill No. 991 AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

William R. Rybczyk
President/CEO
New Opportunities Inc.

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today in support of Raised Senate Bill No. 991 An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers. My name is William Rybczyk and I work as the President/CEO for New Opportunities Inc., the community action agency for the Greater Waterbury, Greater Meriden, and Greater Torrington region. I am a resident of Seymour, CT.

Currently, Connecticut's Medicaid program does not reimburse Community Health Worker (CHW) services or incentivize health care providers to work with CHWs. Community Health Workers are an effective way to address inequities and promote health, particularly for low income households served by Medicaid.

New Opportunities, Inc. has over 50 social service programs which address the basic needs of community residents in the areas of fuel assistance, housing assistance, early childhood education, re-entry services, and senior nutrition services. The agency currently utilizes Community Health workers to provide a comprehensive approach to meeting the social determinants of health for the customers we see. This includes an assessment process to determine needs and linkages to external community resources as necessary. Our CHWs are trusted advocates in the community and conduct outreach services for hard to reach and disenfranchised populations. The current need is far greater than the agency's capacity to address CHW work. By providing the avenue of Medicaid reimbursement the agency will be able to maximize its efforts and impact.

Medicaid reimbursement for community health workers should:

- Center community and CHW voices in all stages of design and implementation
- Reimburse at rates high enough to employ CHWs at a livable wage and cover the costs of supervision, billing, and professional development
- Cover a comprehensive list of CHW services

I unequivocally support the enactment of Senate Bill No. 991 which will ensure that a sustainable financial resource is made available to support a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work in trying to ensure that this essential network is supported with necessary resources.

Sincerely,

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